

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 /020 W
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R 101311Z MAR 76
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
TO USDOC WASHDC
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 9728
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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FOR BEWT/TDAD/BOWIE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BBAK, BTIO, FI

SUBJECT: FINNISH CONSULTANT OLLI BACKMAN

REF: (A) USDOC 3568 (B) 75 HELSINKI 1861

1. EMBASSY UNABLE BE DEFINITIVE, BUT CONSIDERS IT
EXTREMELY UNLIKELY THAT BACKMAN CLAIMS VALID.

2. REF B BASED ON PERUSYHTYMA REPUTATION, AFTER
COMPANY VERIFIED BACKMAN WORKING ON THEIR BEHALF.
THIS PRESUMABLY IS COMMOFF'S "CHECK-OUT" CITED BY
BACKMAN. PERUSYHTYMA MANAGING DIRECTOR JAAKKOLA
TOLD COMMOFF THAT BACKMAN HAS ADVISED COMPANY IN PAST
ON STATUS ITS BIDS SUBMITTED TO USSR, BUT THAT BACKMAN
HAS NOT ACTUALLY LOCATED OR DEVELOPED PROJECTS FOR
COMPANY. COMPANY CONSIDERS HOTEL PROJECT (REF B)
STILL POSSIBLE, ALTHOUGH BARELY INTO PRELIMINARY STAGE,
WITH PARTICIPATION OF HILTON OR HOLIDAY INN, BUT
SOURCE OF THIS INFORMATION IS BACKMAN. COMPANY HAD
CONTACT WITH A MR. LEWIS, EUROPEAN DIRECTOR OF HOLIDAY
INN, BASED IN BRUSSELS; AND BACKMAN ONCE TOLD COMMOFF
THAT HILTON VICE-PRESIDENT SIDNEY WILLNER, BASED IN
NEW YORK, HAD VISITED MOSCOW AND HELSINKI IN CONNECTION
WITH PROJECT. PRESUMABLY ONE OF THESE TWO MIGHT HAVE
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USEFUL INFORMATION ON BACKMAN'S ACCESS IN USSR.

3. BACKMAN'S OWN RECORD AS AN ENTREPRENEUR IS UNIMPRESSIVE. LOCAL PARTICIPANT IN EAST TRADE SAID BACKMAN UNKNOWN TO HIM, AND OTHER CHECKS INDICATED HE IS NOT WELL-KNOWN NOR KNOWN TO HAVE ANY PARTICULAR CONNECTIONS WITH THE EAST. IT IS DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW THE EAST TRADE HOWEVER, SO WE CANNOT BE CERTAIN.

4. COMMERCIAL OFFICE HAS RECEIVED SIMILAR INQUIRY FROM LOCAL REP OF PAN-AM, AND FROM US COMPANY, MDC CORP, 405 LEXINGTON AVE, NEW YORK CITY (MILTON FREEMAN, ASSISTANT TO THE VICE-PRESIDENT). EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE USDOC PASSING ON INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE.

5. COMMENT: BACKMAN APPEARS TO THE COMMERCIAL OFFICE AS A MAN OF GRAND VISIONS WITH NOT MUCH OF A TRACK RECORD. IT IS THE RECOLLECTION OF THE COMMERCIAL OFFICER THAT BACKMAN USES NAMES LOOSELY, AND APPEARS TO BE TRYING TO BUILD CONNECTIONS WITH HIMSELF IN THE MIDDLE. FOR EXAMPLE, MR. JAAKKOLA ANSWERED A QUESTION ABOUT BACKMAN'S CONTACTS BY CITING LATTER'S ABILITY TO PUT PERUSYHTYMA IN TOUCH WITH HOLIDAY INN AND HILTON (NO CREDIT GIVEN TO USDOC). FINALLY, FROM PERUSYHTYMA DESCRIPTION, BACKMAN'S SOURCE FOR INFORMATION ABOUT STATUS OF THAT FIRM'S BIDS FOR USSR BUSINESS (PARA 2 ABOVE) COULD BE FINN WITH ACCESS TO JOINT FINLAND-USSR COMMISSION DATA POSSIBLY IN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. COMMOFF NOT WELL ACQUAINTED WITH SOVIET BUSINESS METHODS, BUT BACKMAN HAS NO DISCOVERABLE RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENTS WHICH WOULD JUSTIFY THEIR CONFIDENCE.
AUSTAD

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 MAR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976HELSIN00506
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760091-0159
From: HELSINKI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760377/aaaacpjn.tel
Line Count: 93
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 HELSINKI 1861
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <31 MAR 2004 by MartinML>; APPROVED <29 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FINNISH CONSULTANT OLLI BACKMAN
TAGS: BBAK, BTIO, FI
To: COM
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006